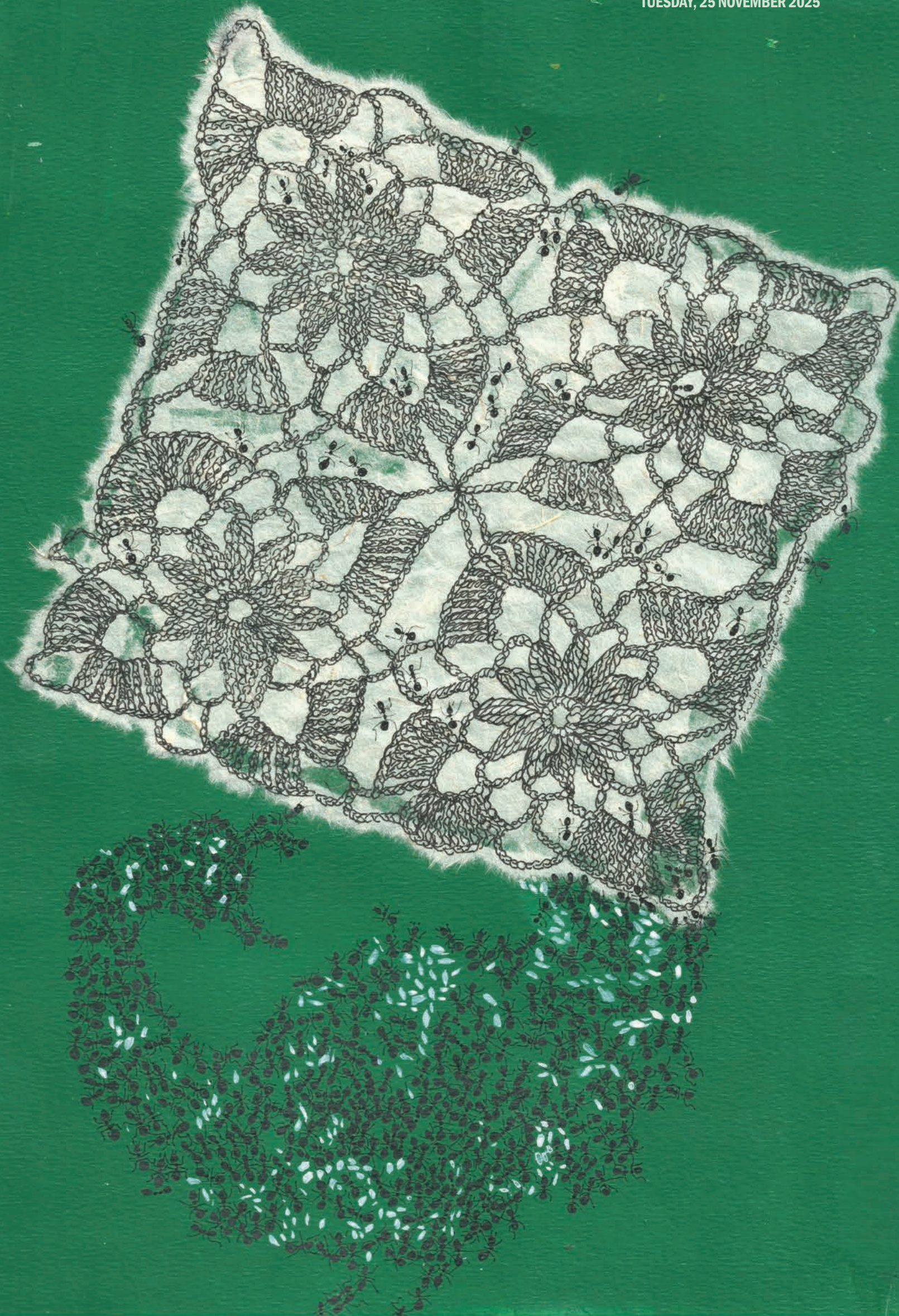


THE PEACOCK

TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2025



Farewell, Hero

BY SACHIN CHATTE

“It’s not about the age, it’s the mileage,” remarked Dharmendra in Sriram Raghavan’s *Johnny Gaddar* (2007) – he was already in his 70s when he delivered that line with a flair unmatched by any other actor.

A cloud of sorrow enveloped IFFI 2025 yesterday morning, with the news of Dharmendra’s passing – it signifies the conclusion of an era. In the sprawling tapestry of Indian cinema, few names evoke the same affection and nostalgia as this great star of the golden age.

Born Dharam Singh Deol in 1935 in Punjab, he arrived in Bombay with aspirations that would ultimately transform the landscape of Hindi film heroism. His evolution from a small-town youth to one of Bollywood’s most enduring icons is a testament to his innate charisma, versatility, and a distinctive screen presence that transcended traditional acting methods and lasted well over six decades.

His entry into the film industry was the stuff of dreams for any aspiring actor. After winning the Filmfare talent contest in 1958, he made his debut with *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere* in 1960. However, it was *Phool Aur Patthar* (1966) that solidified his status as a leading man. In this film, he portrayed a hardened criminal who rediscovers his humanity through love, a role that highlighted his ability to express vulnerability beneath a tough facade. The film’s success established him as the industry’s new romantic hero, albeit one with an edge, a ruggedness that distinguished him from his peers.

The late 1960s and early 1970s represented Dharmendra’s golden era. Bimal Roy’s *Bandini* (1963) showcased his capacity for nuanced performances, while *Anupama* (1966) revealed his sensitivity in a more subdued, introspective role. These films demonstrated that beneath the action hero image lay an actor of significant depth. His collaborations with Hema Malini would become legendary, both on-screen and in real life.

It was *Sholay* (1975) that cemented Dharmendra’s place in the collective memory of Indian viewers. As Veeru, the loquacious and charismatic half of the legendary duo alongside Amitabh Bachchan’s Jai, Dharmendra delivered a performance that seamlessly blended comedy, action, romance, and tragedy. His impeccable comic timing during the iconic suicide scene on the water tank, his romantic pursuit of Basanti, and his camaraderie with Bachchan crafted moments that are forever ingrained in cinematic

history. *Sholay* transcended the realm of film; it evolved into a cultural phenomenon, with Dharmendra’s Veeru emerging as an archetype of the endearing hero capable of unleashing rage when required—who can forget that memorable line in the climax: “Basanti, in kutton ke saamne mat naachna” or the way he affectionately referred Leela Mishra as “Mausiji” in the film.

Throughout the 1970s, Dharmendra’s versatility was evident through a variety of roles. In Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s *Satyakam* (1969), he depicted an idealistic individual grappling with moral conflicts, garnering critical acclaim for his nuanced performance. This represented Dharmendra the actor, distinct from Dharmendra the star. Likewise, in *Chupke Chupke* (1975), another masterpiece by Mukherjee, he exhibited flawless comic timing,

portraying a botany professor who impersonates as a driver. His character, Pyaare Mohan, highlighted his capacity to navigate sophisticated comedy with elegance and intellect.

His action films from the 1980s established his status as the “He-Man” of Bollywood. However, prior to that, he starred in films such as *Mera Gaon Mera Desh* (1971), *Charas* (1976), and *Jugnu* (1973), which showcased his ability to blend physical strength with emotional complexity.

During the 1980s, Dharmendra maintained his prominence, although the evolving landscape of Hindi cinema began to favor different types of heroes. Nevertheless, films like *Ghulami* (1985) and *Hukumat* (1987) demonstrated that his box office appeal remained robust. He adapted to the demands of the decade while preserving his core screen identity. His chemistry with various leading ladies, from Sharmila Tagore to Rekha, enriched his romantic credentials. For nearly thirty years, he collaborated with every prominent actress of the time.

What set Dharmendra apart was his grounded nature, an authenticity that made him relatable despite his celebrity status. Whether portraying a rural simpleton or a sophisticated urbanite, he infused a natural essence into his performances. His physicality was never just for show; it enhanced his characters, rendering his action scenes credible and his romantic moments infused with genuine emotion.

Films like *Samadhi* (1972) showcased an actor unafraid to take risks, willing to delve into intricate characters that defied the conventional hero archetype. This readiness to experiment, even at the height of his commercial success, reflects an artistic sensibility that is often overlooked in discussions about his career.

As his career evolved into character roles in the 1990s and later, Dharmendra imbued father figures and supporting roles with dignity and depth. His work in this millennium includes *Johnny Gaddar* (2007), where he portrays the mastermind, and a significant role in Raghavan’s *Ikkis* (2025), set to release next month, exemplifies this.

Dharmendra’s legacy transcends mere numbers and awards. He embodies an era when heroism could be both straightforward and profound, when stars could be both larger-than-life and deeply human. Rest in peace, Sir and thank you for the starlight.



Shekhar Kapur: “IFFI is a people’s festival”



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

INTERVIEWED BY CHANDRAHAS CHOUDHURY

With this edition of IFFI, you come to the end of your two-year term as director. What is the most interesting thing about Indian cinema today that you’ve learnt from being inside the festival system?

The biggest issue facing Indian cinema today is the lack of theatre screens. We are the largest producers of films in the world, but we have only about 8000 working screens. China has 90,000, and because of that their directors are empowered. Their big films do one billion dollars worth of business in China alone, and that money goes back into the industry. I think one of the things we have to leverage better is that cinema has a global soft power for India. We just don’t use that enough. We’ve actually lost ground internationally since the middle of the twentieth century. Do you know the biggest overseas hit ever in Indian cinema? Raj Kapoor’s *Awaara* (1951). It did 30 million dollars of business at that time overseas. But what happened afterwards was that India went through a huge foreign exchange crisis, and Indian producers and directors couldn’t really market their films globally. Then Hollywood came in and took over the globe.

So, although we keep saying that India is a storytelling country, and of course it is, what we don’t talk about is that

Indian filmmakers don’t have the money to promote. Again, some kinds of Indian films that could work internationally just couldn’t get made in India. The money for *Bandit Queen* (1994) didn’t come from India, it came from Channel 4 in the UK. Of course, we have a big diaspora market. But that’s just the diaspora market. We now have to try to go beyond that.

How does this matrix of ideas relate to your championing of AI in the film industry?

That’s why AI is such a big part of this festival. Because AI reduces the entry level. See, if you want to get a theatrical release today, the theatre wants scale in the film. The only way to get scale today is to get a major star. But if the star also takes away 70 per cent of the sales value, then you’re not getting scale, you’re just getting a star. Why I’m pushing AI so much is because it can give you scale at a very low cost. One, it dramatically lowers the cost of production. If you come to the screenings of the short films made by the entrants for the 48-hour AI Hackathon, you’ll be stunned at the production values. They are already beginning to find an artistic language for AI.

And two, soon AI will be creating its own stars. That process has already begun with Tilly Norwood [the AI-generated character created in 2025 by the Dutch production company Particle6]. If you say to me that the difference between Tilly

Norwood and Tom Cruise is that Tom Cruise is real, I’m going to ask: when did you last shake hands with Tom Cruise? You think that he is real because you love what he does on screen! So, it won’t be long before actors are AI. I could easily imagine making, say, a Marvel film with AI today, but not a *Masoom* (1983). That special something that Shabana Azmi or Cate Blanchett could bring to a scene, it can’t right now.

Your argument seems unusual in that you’re arguing both for the power of AI, which is a cutting-edge technology promising lots of disruption, and for more cinema theatres, which represent the most traditional way of seeing films and which have lost ground to personal devices. Can the cinema theatre survive as a social space?

It certainly can – at a certain level. Seven or eight thousand screens for all of India isn’t a lot. Say three shows a day, even at 800 seats a show, that’s only 7000 people. I love going to the theatre – I’ll never forget the first film I ever saw in a theatre, *Uran Khatola* (1955) at Delhi’s Plaza Cinema. To say that we don’t want theatres is like saying we don’t want to have restaurants, because Swiggy brings the food home to you anyway. But people still like going out to eat. The cinema is a social idea. It’s a social gathering, which you can’t get on OTT. At the cinema we

don’t laugh alone. We laugh as a group. But people also don’t go to cinemas anymore because they’re too expensive. So, we should find a cheaper way of going to the theatre, and create more theatres.

Is the Waves Film Bazaar as big a part of IFFI as the films being screened for delegates?

Actually, the marketplace runs the festival. The marketplace is important, because filmmakers with new ideas go there. Payal Kapadia came out of there. Mira Nair came out of there. And increasingly, people from all over the world go there, and it’s a sharing place. You share ideas, you share work in production, you find other people who are interested in India, in Indian storytelling, or now, even international storytelling. There’s no reason for us not to make a big Marvel film in India, or a big sci-fi film in India.

What are the other changes that you were able to implement as Director?

I don’t run the festival. NFDC and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) do that. But I persuade. The whole AI push at IFFI is persuasion. And then I got Larsen & Toubro involved, and they funded the AI film competition. I think I persuaded the festival not to have the opening ceremony in a big hall, as it was traditionally done, but to bring it to the street, because it’s a people’s festival first and foremost.

Saraswathi Buyyala: “Filmmaking is *Tapasya*”

BY PANKHURI ZAHEER DASGUPTA

When Saraswathi Buyyala speaks about mentorship and access, you can hear both tenderness and resolve in her voice. The writer-director, and creative producer with over twenty years of experience in the animation and VFX industry, is the CEO and Creative Director of Dancing Atoms Studios, which develops original animated and live-action stories. She is also on the board of the Hollywood chapter of Association Internationale du Film d'Animation and the co-lead for Women in Animation India Collective. But her fascinating story begins in 1985, with a father who travelled to the first Annecy International Animation Film Festival with a dream but returned with rejection.

Buyyala's father wanted to make an animated film at a time when India had no ecosystem for it. He didn't find the support and guidance he was looking for at the festival, came home, sold his wife's jewellery, quit his job, hired a few artists, and set to work on a film that was never completed. Acutely feeling the lack of community, he formed a small club for animators in his hometown in Andhra Pradesh. “He never had a residency, never had a writing workshop, never had a community. Just his brother, his wife, and his two crazy kids.”

That is why building community has been Buyyala's quiet rebellion in an industry plagued by gatekeeping. When she co-founded Rhythm & Hues Asia in her twenties, in an era when cinematographers, editors, and directors would “keep everything to themselves” she consciously chose to be different, and “magic happened. There is that beautiful thing called trust. Every rejection, every hustle, comes back to that one philosophy.” Her informal *gyaan* sessions, where she taught young artists everything from compound interest to creative discipline, have today grown into apprenticeships, training programs and labs. Mentorship has become second nature.

Animation, VFX, and tech continue to have a minuscule number of women, and even fewer head technical departments. “You can count them on your fingers.” She believes the problem is not just a lack of opportunities but also women refusing to open the door for other women. “We need to recommend each other more, collaborate more, create space instead of competing.” She is also generous about men who

shaped her career. “I had a phenomenal father, an amazing brother, a husband who says, *you succeed, I will be your backdrop*. I have had iconic male mentors. A few bad ones too, but repeating those stories does not serve any purpose.” She does, however, emphatically add, “More men need to stand up. Give women more writing work. Invite them to co-direct. Make space.”

Filmmaking demands years of waiting for your project to be greenlit. Not one to waste her creative time, she has recently turned to transmedia. Two of her comic books, *Hanuman Chalisa* and *Devi Kavach*, are out now. “Writing is the purest form of storytelling. You commit to a design and a universe. You do not have to wait for a studio.” Self-publishing became a way to strengthen her IP, and she's eager to pass on the skill set to young creators.

Her animated feature *Neelu*, co-written with Indu Ramchandani, was selected for the Co-Production Market at the Film Bazaar in 2023. Supported by industry friends and collaborators, she has raised over 300,000 US dollars. Studios in Belgium and Spain have also shown interest in co-producing the project. The wait, however, is long. “Two years of pitching. I am getting antsy.” While she gets the required funds in place to get her film into production, she is already developing a graphic novel. “Filmmaking is nothing but *tapasya*. You keep repeating: I am going to make it, I am going to make it.”

Her other project, an anthology of stories about fathers and daughters from different parts of the world, was rejected for three years by big production houses. Undeterred, she started a Kickstarter fund for the film. She has already raised 15,000 US dollars. The project is also supported by Jorge Gutierrez, the beloved creator of *The Book of Life* (2014).

Buyyala's secret superpower seems to be gratitude. “All the left turns and all the right turns, the good people and the bad people, thank them all. If the bad things had not happened, I would not be here. If the good people did not stand by me, I would also not be here.”



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

SHORT TAKES



My film *Notun Gur* started in the screenwriter's lab, moved to the co-production market, and now it's in the Film Bazaar recommendations.

Deyali Mukherjee
Director
Kolkata



Festivals like this show that storytelling gives meaning to life; science saves us, but art helps us live.

Ed Vollans
Academic
United Kingdom



In movies, caregivers are often overlooked. My film *September 21* is about Alzheimer's from a caregiver's perspective.

Karen Kshiti Suvarna
Director
Mumbai



The conversations here feel more focused; everyone knows exactly what they want to create.

Koustabh Mukherjee
Cinematographer
Kolkata

Remi Adefarasin: “My style is honesty”

BY PRAGYA BHAGAT

Describe your IFFI experience so far.

Since we’ve gotten here, it’s been wonderful. The food, the hospitality, we feel very much at home. The organizers have been fantastic. The artistic director has done an amazing job. The films are so hard to judge, because some of them are so good, but they are all so varied. We haven’t even seen half of them. It’s amazing how powerful cinema is. Cinema is not just the story. It’s faces and characters, music and movement and expression and humanity. It’s astounding how many different types of movies there are. This festival has reminded me there are films for everybody.

Take our readers through the evolution of your relationship with cinema.

My father bought me a camera when I was eight years old. My mother couldn’t afford film, so I used to imagine taking photographs. My grandfather had bought a camera and an enlarger. He developed his own negatives, and he showed me how to do it. He gave me an old enlarger along with developing tools and chemicals. I fell in love with taking pictures and printing them. After college, I was very lucky to be accepted by the BBC, to be a trainee assistant cameraman. I went to the BBC Film Department in Ealing and spent eleven years there as a camera assistant and then as a cameraman. I stayed there for twenty-eight years.

I just love telling stories. I can’t stand up and talk to a crowd of people. I am not very good at telling jokes. But I love helping directors, writers, and actors. I love visualizing stories in cinema.

Describe your cinematographic voice.

I try not to be typecast. I did three films for Shekhar Kapur: *Elizabeth* (1998), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), and *What’s Love Got To Do With It?* (2022). There was a time when producers and directors kept asking me to do period dramas. I’ve done comedies, like *Johnny English* (2003) and *Little Fockers* (2010). I do romantic stories too. I like variety, but my style is honesty. I want to make it look like there’s no one thinking behind the



camera. I want the audience to be sucked into the story and not be aware that they are being manipulated by the visuals.

In the films that you are watching as part of the International Jury, what trends are you noticing in contemporary cinema?

There’s one thing that surprised us. A lot of the film makers are shooting in 1.37:1, a squarer aspect ratio. It is also called the Academy Frame. This is what you see on an old-fashioned television. These ratios are being used instead of ratios like 1.85:1, the normal cinema screen, or 2.39:1, the really widescreen. While films are typically made for large-screen cinema, they live on through television screens at home. This might explain the trend.

Is this your first trip to India?

Many years ago, Dev Anand and Tina Munim were in a film called *Man Pasand* (1980). The BBC made a documentary

about the making of that film and how it was an adaptation of George Bernard Shaw’s play, *Pygmalion*. K.K. Mahajan was the cinematographer of *Man Pasand*. I came to India for the shooting of that documentary. I noticed that when we were shooting on the streets of Mumbai, people knew the direction we were filming in, and they formed a funnel. When I panned the camera, the funnel of people moved with me. People in India are very aware of cinema. They love watching movies. So much has changed in India since then, but Indians remain very gentle people.

What is the nature of collaboration between a cinematographer, director, and producer?

Cinema is all about having a good story to tell, not trying to show off or be clever or necessarily do it all in one take. With digital cameras, everyone can tell exactly what you’re getting. Directors can see

the frame, the color, the nature of the light. Producers might offer feedback like *make it brighter, make it closer*. With film cameras, the quality isn’t as high, the images are bleary and dim. When producers see the film developed and projected, they realize that they should’ve left you alone. The director and cinematographer have a relationship of trust. The director talks about what they want to feel, and the cinematographer takes care of that.

Do you have any advice for those aspiring to tell stories behind a lens?

If you’re making a film about submarines, don’t watch a film about submarines. Just close your eyes and imagine your story.

You were the first black person to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Cinematography. What is it that you still aspire for?

To make another film!

SHORT TAKES



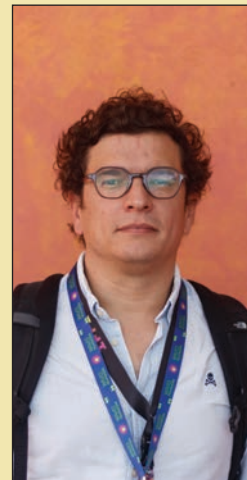
My batch from the SRFTI is being felicitated this year, and I’m excited to meet my batchmates, who I haven’t seen in 20 years.

Basab Mullik
Cinematographer
Kolkata



Spirituality, consciousness and cinema meet here; each story mirrors our shared humanity.

Gina Sharma
Actor
Mumbai



I think IFFI is one of the most important film festivals in Asia and the world. I wish the Film Bazaar could go on for a few more days.

Ian Carrasco
Producer
London



Every screening here is a celebration of global creativity and connection.

Ida Sonni
Producer
Italy

“Design is the first frame”



BY SAACHI D'SOUZA

Most people move in and out through IFFI without careful attention to the design decisions that shape every surface, every turn, every backdrop and banner. But almost everything we see at the festival—the colours, the poster, pavilions, merchandise, spatial flow—comes from a design team that works long hours to build the sensorial experience. This year, this team was led by Savyasachi Anju Prabir of National Institute of Design (NID).

NID has a longer relationship with IFFI than most realise. “The famous peacock logo from the fifth IFFI was made by NID,” Savyasachi reminds me. That early landmark established a precedent: Indian design shaping India’s biggest cinema event. Decades later, NID returned to the festival ecosystem formally. “NID got a project with NFDC in 2023,” he says. “That included identity and branding for IFFI, Film Bazaar, and the India pavilions abroad.”

By 2025, this had expanded into a massive design mandate. “We were designing for Cannes, Berlin, Toronto,

Rotterdam—everywhere the India Pavilion went. The IFFI identity started releasing earlier in the year because the festival poster launches at Cannes,” he says.

This year, the project returned later than usual, and the team focused solely on IFFI, Film Bazaar, and Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT). “We handle everything—from the poster to the lanyard to the last flag on a pole.”

Visual identity begins with a conversation about intention. “We always ask the client: What is the vision? What’s the tonality? The larger point is always showcasing Indian cinema’s soft power. How do we want to position ourselves globally?”

“This year we chose a flying peacock. It felt right to say, Indian cinema has taken off.” But this peacock wasn’t digital—it was handmade, textured, almost tactile. “We wanted the mark of the hand. A pencil line. A stroke. It mirrors the real labour that goes into filmmaking.”

Colours are inspired by the setting, “Kala Academy has its tones. ESG has its tones. INOX has its surfaces. Designing for IFFI means imagining how the identity

sits on real buildings, in real light.” For Prabir, the festival’s design must look like it belongs to its geography, not be imposed on it.

Once the main identity is locked, the team expands it into three connected verticals. “IFFI, Film Bazaar, and CMOT each need a concept derived from the poster,” he explains. Three parallel worlds, one family. Then everything translates across hundreds of components: catalogues, schedules, accreditation badges, social media templates, animations, invitations, stage backdrops, wayfinding, car stickers, merchandise, and flags. “It’s every object a delegate touches. So consistency matters.”

Prabir says “a lot of our work is helping people think about design holistically—beyond colours and motifs. It’s about movement, access, and usability.” Sometimes it’s the small choices that shape experience. “Once, the red carpet blocked movement, so we shifted it inside. A design tweak solved the congestion. These little changes matter more than people realise.”

IFFI has become a teaching ecosystem for NID. “Students intern, assist, observe,

pitch, attend Film Bazaar, and learn how a festival works,” says Prabir. “It mixes industry, education, and celebration.” The famous design school’s own film festival, Alpavirama, was founded in 2011 to allow students another platform for their work, and some have even secured support for their graduation films. “Two students were picked up by an external producer last year and six films were supported through our own festival platform.”

Now, says Prabir, there is greater understanding about the institution itself: “Earlier, people didn’t even know NID had a film department. Now students are meeting producers, understanding pitching formats, and seeing how programming happens. The gap between design school and the film industry is narrowing.”

Through it all, the core idea stays simple: design is the first frame of the festival. “Before any film plays, you’ve already entered a visual world,” says Prabir. “That world affects how you experience everything after. A festival isn’t just about the films. It’s about the world those films enter. And that world has to be designed.”

SHORT TAKES



Film Bazaar taught me that collaboration and curiosity are as vital as creativity in filmmaking.

Varun Kapoor
Director
Sambalpur



I’ve been to many other film festivals, but IFFI is different. There are a lot of international filmmakers here exploring their creativity.

Poonam Porwal
Line Producer
Mumbai



Collaboration drives cinema forward; Film Bazaar unites passionate creators with fresh ideas.

Manuraj Dubey
Director
Mumbai



I really enjoyed the opening film *The Blue Trail*, and *Rains Over Babel*. This year’s Film Bazaar is much better than the last.

Remya Rajeev
Animator
Kerala

“The job of the artist is to tell a story, not give answers”

BY KINJAL SETHIA

Tribeny Rai has been visiting IFFI since she was a student at the Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute, and, last year, the rough cut of her film *Shape of Momo* (2025) won the post-production grant by Nube Studio through the Work-in-Progress Lab at the NFDC Film Bazaar. Now her debut directorial venture has come back to Goa with global laurels. The director told *The Peacock* that “it’s not easy for a filmmaker from Sikkim making a film in Nepali to get such exposure as I did, especially since Nepali cinema is not as popular as Hindi. I am still nervous at every screening, but the entire process of

making this film has been very fulfilling. We made it with absolute honesty at its core, and I think it is this honesty which has ensured that the film has travelled to such wonderful festivals.”

Shape of Momo arrives at IFFI after premiering at Busan International Film Festival, and competing for New Directors Award at San Sebastián. Here in Goa, it is competing in two categories: Best Debut Director under the Indian Panorama’s feature category, and Best Debut Feature Film in the International Competition.

Her movie begins when Bishnu, a young girl returns to her village in Sikkim.

While she feels she can be an agent of change, she also comes face to face with her own

vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Rai as she felt an urgent need to correct clichés associated with the Nepali community, “if I went to work in Mumbai and help other people tell their story, then who will tell stories from Sikkim? So, I came back to my village Nandok, and started working on this script.”

Rai says, “I have a problem with the way people look at us. As if we are simpletons or dwellers of some exotic land. There are vague ideas of shamanism or romanticism associated with it. And that is problematic, because are the heroes of our own story.” Growing up, she never saw a film with a character like Bishnu on screen. “I know independent women are expected to be strong and righteous, never making a mistake, have an overpowering personality like a superwoman or a police inspector.” She says, “but even this concept of strength and power is dictated by society. I wanted a protagonist who is flawed, who has her own weaknesses. I wanted to make a character which feels real, honest and hence, relatable. As people, we are very complicated. We don’t mean exactly what we say; there is subtext and context. I want to inspire filmmakers from my community to not fall into the trap of a cliché, but create more nuanced characters and stories.”

One sees Bishnu lying in her grandmother’s lap, and is reminded of the vulnerabilities and sensitivities forced into hiding when a woman aspires to be independent and strong. Rai shares that “as a woman, I cannot be critical of society and ignore my own weakness. I have to admit my privileges because not everyone in Sikkim can study filmmaking like I did. Even now, a majority of the

youth rely on government jobs and the security that it comes with. So, I wanted to create a reflection on this. I have the agency to be critical and I should be cautious of that. To be aware that my urbane understanding of a situation can also be narrow. We tend to make projects out of people only because we assume we are perfect.”

Bishnu is as human as her creator intended, she is harsh with people deprived of any privileges, and fickle when she tries to assuage her own guilt. The director evokes poignancy with a deft hand, and sprinkles details into scenes that create a world very much authentic to its setting, and yet, universal in its honesty. Rai says “I will tell you a secret. The film is shot in my village. The house is my house. Bishnu’s room is my room. For an independent filmmaker like me, it was far more convenient to have control over the process in this way.”

Home has been her inspiration always, says Rai: “We are four sisters. And when I was growing up, every night, my mother would tell us a new story that would have something appealing to each of us. It was wonderful how she made up so many stories. I think that is the seed of my filmmaking. I think it is the job of the artist to tell stories, not give answers. People can come up with their own questions and answers. I am very happy now that everywhere the film has travelled, people have found it relatable. It is the story from my village, but the women in the film are so real and human that their stories have found resonance everywhere.”

Shape of Momo will be screened at Inox Screen III, Panaji at 6.45 pm on 27th November.

Photo by Assavri Kulkarni



I’m here with my documentary *Zinda Hai*, which is about a trans-queer punk band called Inshallah Babes.

Sarthak Jaiswal
Documentary
Filmmaker
Delhi



Film Bazaar is the perfect place to find your niche, learn from experienced people and grow with meaningful, society-changing projects.

Sanzila Gautam
Actress
Nepal



One of the reasons I was looking forward to being in Goa was to learn how to make a seafood curry. I love all the food I’ve had here.

Stephen Sewell
Filmmaker
Australia



As a production student, my first Film Bazaar has given me invaluable exposure and connections even before I enter the industry.

Smriti Sen Gupta
Film Student
Mumbai

SHORT TAKES

Boglantt Cholchitrachi Ponnas Vorsam

BY LEAXAN FREITAS

Boglantt (1975), which translates to slander in English, was the last Konkani film to be shot in black and white. It was produced and directed by Muthukrishnan Das under the banner of Ambika Films and based off a *tiatr* titled 'No Vacancy'. *Tiatr*, derived from the Portuguese word teatro, or theatre in English, is a beloved Goan cultural expression that came out of the 19th century diaspora in Bombay. Here, the plot follows the life of a boy from childhood to adulthood, unfolding its fair share of drama, joy, and heartbreak along the way.

The star cast featured Prem Kumar (the stage name of Pedro Xavier D'Costa) as the protagonist along with Alfred and Rita Rose, Souza Ferrao, Betty Naz, Joe Rose, Ophelia, Seby Coutinho, Filu Fernandes, Paul Romy, and Betty Girl- all of whom were popular *tiatrists* who made the transition from stage to screen.

I have had the opportunity to speak with Betty Naz, Joe Rose and Rita Rose, and delved deeper into the making of the film.

Naz, now 80, is an accomplished actor and singer in *tiatrs* and films. Though she was only 30 at the time the film was shot, she played the protagonist's mother, and was aged several decades for the role. She recalls her most memorable moment on set, when she had to lie inside a coffin with cotton packed into her nose and mouth. "The role originally belonged to another actress but she refused to perform the coffin scene, and that's how I ultimately landed the part," she said.

Joe Rose, a celebrated veteran of the Konkani stage has done it all - singing, acting, directing and writing *tiatrs*. Though 79, he still remains active in the industry and boasts a remarkable memory. In the film, he took on a comedic role. Rose recalled filming over 15 days at Saldanha Farms in Mangalore. Frequent power cuts disrupted the schedule, leading to delays. He remembers a humorous moment involving Paul Romy, who played the other comedic role. Romy chose to keep trimming the ends off of his long hair to fashion a toothbrush mustache for his role; with each delay, he had to snip a little more. "By the end Paul was running out of hair!"

Finally, I spoke to Rita Rose, who's celebrated as the beauty queen of the Konkani stage. Rita enjoyed a stellar career alongside her husband, Alfred. Today at 78, she continues to perform at live concerts, carrying forward their musical legacy. In the film she played the co-lead alongside Prem Kumar. She shared how the director had initially hoped to receive a subsidy from the Goa government but when that didn't materialize, he chose to shoot the film in Mangalore instead, where the local government offered financial support for film productions. She adds that the director avoided retakes as much as possible to save time. "In one scene, Alfie (Alfred Rose) had his coat buttons misaligned, but the director waved it off, saying it looked natural and decided to keep the shot as it was."

As our conversation shifted to the music in the film. Rita proudly shared that all eight songs were recorded in a single day, at Filmalaya Studio in Bombay, since the budget was tight and they could only afford the studio for one day.

Alfred Rose wrote the lyrics and performed six of the eight songs in the film. Fondly called the Melody King of Goa, his contribution to Konkani music culture is immense. The soundtrack to this film is some of his finest work from romantic ballads like 'Tum Mojem Sukh', a popular slow dance number at Goan weddings, to the lively and upbeat 'Novem Vorus',

where Delphine's vocals are sure to get you grooving. In fact, my favourite scene from the film is at a restaurant where Delphine, dressed in 1970s fashion, sings 'Sukhnem Sukhnem' as she walks around the room with a band consisting of an accordion, standing bass, drums, trumpet and an electric guitar accompanying her in the background.

All the songs were released on vinyl by HMV across

4 EPs - to own the complete album, you had to buy four vinyl records. In October 1975, as the songs of *Boglantt* became more and more popular, Alfred happily released a lyric booklet for all the songs titled *Alfred Rose-acheam 'Kantarancho Jhelo No. 6* as part of his ongoing series. This year, as *Boglantt* marks its 50th anniversary, it is the film's music that continues to preserve and celebrate its legacy.



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

Batim Lake is 12 kilometres from Panjim. It was constructed during the Kadamba era (10th to 14th centuries) by Gandogopala Keni of 'Panjar Khani', as indicated by a historical copper plate still with the Keni family. This makes the lake a significant historical site, but it is now known as a popular spot for birding and enjoying nature: Here are some of the species that I have spotted over the years: Common Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Stork Billed Kingfisher, Common Coot, Night Heron, Water Hen, Stilts, Bronze Tailed Jacana. There are also Pink Storks, Open Billed Storks, White Storks, and the duck species Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Northern Pintail, Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Whistling Ducks and Teal.

— Govit Morajkar



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

“Artists should have freedom to show life as it is”

BY POULOMI DAS

Across the last decade, the National Award-winning filmmaker Praveen Morchhale has fashioned a cinema of resistance built around ordinary people pushed into extraordinary circumstances. His narratives move with the gentleness of human observation. But beneath it lies an unwavering gaze that underlines the fragility of lives caught in systems that refuse to see them. His latest, the Urdu-language *White Snow* (2025), which is playing as part of the Indian Panorama section at IFFI, marks perhaps his most direct confrontation with questions of artistic repression.

The origins of his new film go back to a chance conversation in Kargil a few years ago. Morchhale was there working on another project, when he met a young filmmaker whose short film had been banned by local authorities after a religious leader objected to a scene depicting childbirth. “He mentioned it casually, but I felt that this was an important story instantly,” Morchhale tells *The Peacock*, adding, “as artists, we should have the freedom to show life as it is.”

That encounter became the seed of *White Snow*, with Morchhale developing it into a script in just a few weeks. Set in and around Kargil, the film follows Amir, a young filmmaker whose short film is banned after an officious cleric takes offence to a childbirth scene—its blood, its realism, its refusal to sanitize life. When he refuses to censor the scene, Amir’s creative voice is shut down. His film is pulled. His social media accounts are blocked. Fanatics single him out. Authorities summon him, in a mix of menace and absurdity.

The fact that all this uproar is over a short film—a medium that rarely receives public attention—makes the scenario even more pointed. Morchhale, who also wrote and co-produced *White Snow*, is showing us a world where the scale of offence is irrelevant. In a climate of fear, any expression can become a threat. As he points out, creating art is not the difficult proposition, “But exhibiting that art to the

public has become very difficult.”

In fact, the distinction between state censorship and what he refers to as “street censorship” preoccupies Morchhale. “This practice of mobs threatening filmmakers, abusing them online, and creating unnecessary cases is a dangerous thing to happen. Unless you have diverse opinions, you cannot have a healthy society.”

Working again with his regular Iranian cinematographer Mohammadreza Jahanpanah—whose credits include Jafar Panahi’s *Closed Curtain* (2013)—the 57-year-old filmmaker shapes *White Snow* into both a rugged road movie, and an intimate portrait of a mother and son, expanding it beyond a narrative about censorship into something far more human.

In a sense, the heart of *White Snow* belongs to Amir’s elderly mother, Fatima. Distressed by what has happened to her son, she loads an old television onto her yak and begins a long, punishing

trek across remote Himalayan villages to show the film to whoever will watch. Her journey across the snow-covered landscape slowly starts wearing her down. As fatigue and isolation begin to warp her mind, she edges toward madness—yet, paradoxically, also toward a kind of liberation. Morchhale says “this film is not only about artistic freedom. It is also about the mother’s love for her son and that desire to show art, irrespective of the obstacles.”

Morchhale’s filmmaking style has always been rooted in stripped-down realism. He works with non-professional actors, avoids ornamentation, and embraces the rhythms of lived environments. In *White Snow*, the filmmaker’s preoccupations - with simplicity as a tool and landscape as a character - finds full expression. For one, he keeps the visual language pared down and elemental, a decision rooted in his belief that “the camera should be a neutral,

observant person.” The crew, as always in his films, was lean, comprising about 12 people. And the shoot lasted just 22 days, slowed only by the logistics of transporting the yak, heavy equipment, and television through unforgiving terrain.

This fiercely independent filmmaker funds most of his work himself. Morchhale says “I’m a very fast filmmaker. I start getting restless if I don’t start a film every two years. If I wait for funding, the film will never happen.” Which brings us to the metaphor at the heart of *White Snow*: a quiet love letter to cinema itself. In the director’s telling, the yak becomes the public; the television, the cinema they must carry. “Earlier, cinema travelled to people,” he says. “Now we have to take cinema back to people again.”

White Snow screens at 4 pm on 26th November at Ravindra Bhavan Margao. Another screening is at 6 pm on the same day at Magic Moviez Screen-I, Ponda.

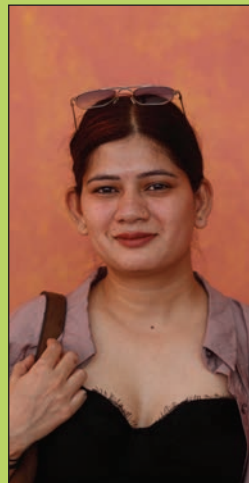


SHORT TAKES



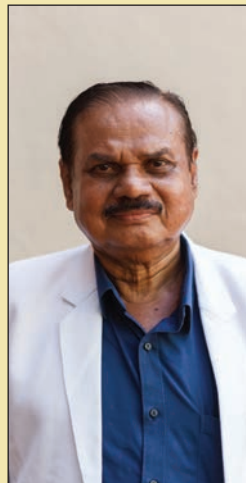
Cinema connects creators across continents; Film Bazaar reminds us how vital collaboration is to storytelling.

Pavan Balagam
VFX Artist
London



I'd like to see more safety measures for women at the Bazaar. A safety desk would be very helpful.

Neha Malviya
Licensing Partner
Bangalore



Meeting filmmakers and seeing new projects inspires me. IFFI brings opportunities to collaborate and learn.

Prakash Tribhuvan
Director
Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar



My favourite thing about the festival is meeting different people. I like that everyone comes here with their movies.

Sonal Singh
Actor
Mumbai

Brother of the Sea

AN EXCERPT FROM *TSUNAMI SIMON* (2013) BY DAMODAR MAUZO

‘What’s that noise outside?’ Marcelin stood up first. Dulcin too, got up to investigate the loud sounds of the running feet.

‘What’s going on, Caitu?’ She asked Caetan who was running towards the sea.

‘It seems that a dolphin has been caught in Santan’s net!’

Dulcin remembered that some time ago, an almost two-metre long dolphin had been trapped in Gabru’s, her husband’s net. Gabru had carefully released her into the creek where all the fisherfolk kids from Kharvi-ward, had a wonderful time playing with her. Even Bula, then alive, had hitched a ride on the dolphin’s back.

Dulcin rushed to see what was happening now.

What a mad rush!

Everybody was making a bee line for the beach. An irritated Santan was driving the people away. It appeared from his behaviour that he wanted the people to go from there so that he could take the dolphin away and cut it up.

Dulcin went close to it. This was somewhat smaller than the dolphin which had been caught in Gabru’s net a couple of years

ago. She hadn’t been dragged up the shore yet. Whenever a wave was washed up, she would flap around in an attempt to swim away. The entreating eyes of the dolphin began to wrench at Dulcin’s heart. The look was so familiar.

The same guileless, trusting eyes. It was Bula, her daughter!

‘Is that a dolphin?’ A tourist was excitedly getting ready to click photograph.

Santan was fuming. Shouting, ‘Go away! It’s not dolphin. It is *bulguem*. Now go! Don’t disturb!’ he shouted as he moved towards the tourist menacingly. The poor guy scampered away in fright.

The locals did not say anything. Everybody knew that the dolphin was a protected species under the law. In any case, a traditional fisherman would never kill a dolphin. Whenever one was caught, it would be released into the sea. Gabru too had released the dolphin into the sea after allowing the children to play with it for some time. But today’s youth had developed a taste for dolphin’s meat.

They used to clandestinely kill and eat the creature. Besides, the meat fetched a good price too. ‘Arre Santan, you’d better release the dolphin into the sea. You may be reported,’ Jaki, the elderly fisherman, advised softly.

Santan snarled angrily, ‘I’ll hack anybody who opens his mouth! Does anyone dare? Go away all of you!’

Turning back to Jaki, he said in a low voice, with a malevolent smile, ‘our minister will be very pleased. He loves dolphin meat. You go home. I’ll take care of this.’

Santan had managed to obtain a subsidy and license for a motorized boat after pleading and begging the minister. He now used it for fishing even during the breeding season

the love of God!’

The sound of her tremulous voice and tear-filled eyes stunned everyone around. Santan who had opened his mouth to roar, was left open-mouthed.

‘Please, Santan! Look at her eyes! Please!’

Marcelin stepped forward. Putting her arms around Dulcin, she began to soothe her. ‘just look at her eyes, Marcelin. They are my Bula’s eyes. Tell him! Tell him to let her go.’ Dulcin broke into sobs.

The atmosphere at the beach had undergone a complete transformation. And

at that very moment

Gabru appeared.

Gabriel

Baptista was

a traditional

fisherman,

proud to belong to the

fishing community and well respected for his integrity.

When Gabru stepped forward, four of Santan’s cronies

withdrew surreptitiously.

‘Santan, you

are a traditional

fisherman. What

are you doing with that dolphin?’

Santan did a quick mental calculation. If the incident got publicity, even his minister friend would not be able to save him.

‘Who says I am pulling her out of water? Of course, I am going to release her into the sea.’

‘So why are you delaying? Come on men.’

Dulcin ran and

hugged the dolphin, running both her hands all over her body and

wiping her tear-filled eyes. The gratitude in the dolphin’s eyes was patent

for all the fisher-folk around to see. The net was promptly

lifted and carried into the water.

It was slowly opened and the

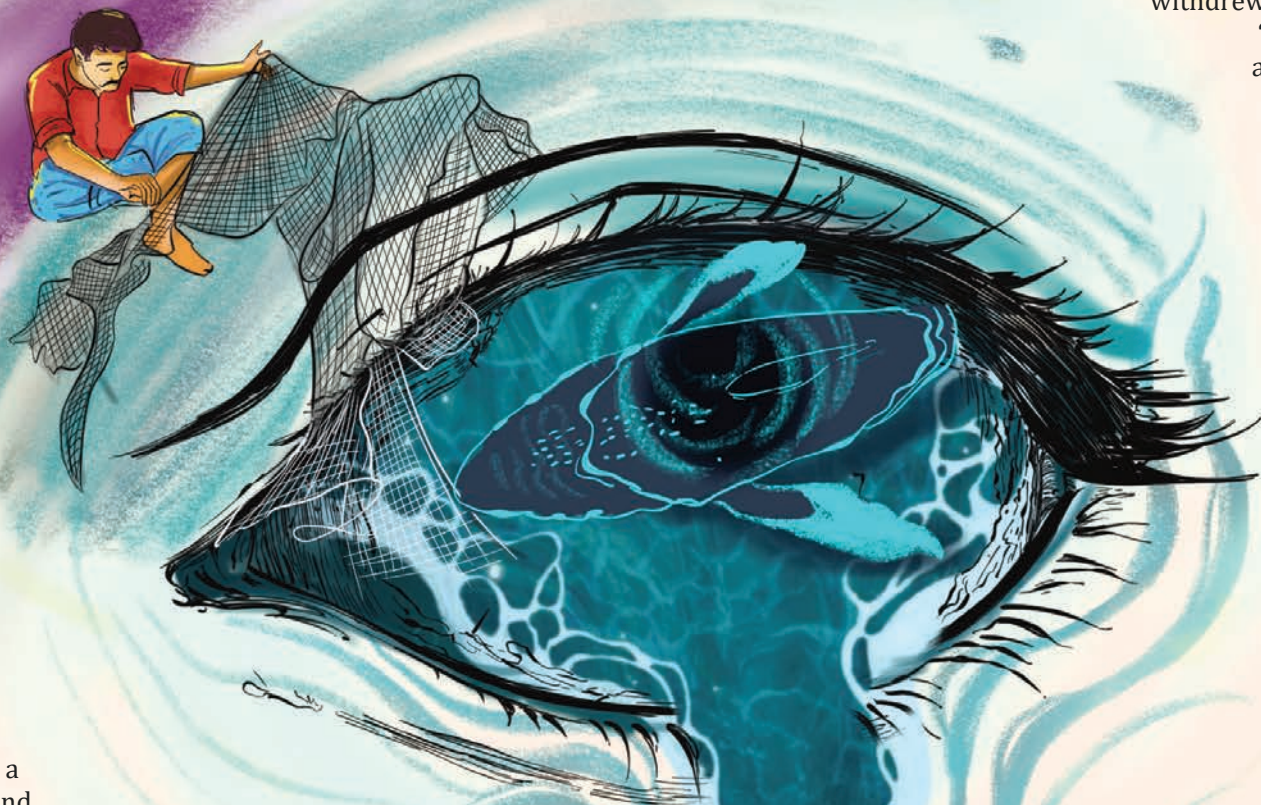
Dolphin gently lifted out and released into the open sea. The dolphin responded

by turning around in a circle. She then gave a couple of graceful leaps before merging into the blueness of the ocean.

Simon who had reached the shore with his friends, a short while back after hearing about the dolphin, had watched everything with bated breath. His chest now filled with pride and admiration for the way his parents had acted.

Damodar Mauzo won the 2022 Jnanpith Award

Illustration by Sayali Khairnar



56th International Film Festival
Schedule - 25th November 2025

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1 9:00 AM DREAMS (SEX LOVE) 11:30 AM MY FATHER'S SHADOW 1:45 PM MOTHER'S BABY 4:15 PM THE PRESIDENT'S CAKE 6:45 PM SOUND OF FALLING 9:45 PM THE BOOK OF SIJJIN AND ILLIYYIN	3:00 PM MY DAUGHTER'S HAIR 5:30 PM AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING. THE FIRST DAY 7:30 PM PINCH 9:30 PM GORGONÀ	ASHOK AUDI 10:00 AM THE LAST VIKING 1:00 PM MARE'S NEST 4:00 PM MEMORY OF PRINCESS MUMBI 7:00 PM DREAMING IS NOT SLEEPING	2:00 PM HAMSAFAR 5:15 PM WHISPERS OF THE MOUNTAIN 7:30 PM THUDARUM
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 2 9:30 AM THAT'S A WRAP 12:45 PM CHALO INDIA WITH ERIC JI 4:30 PM PATRALEKHA 8:00 PM BHAIMON DA	INOX PANJIM - AUDI 4 10:00 AM KHOYA PAYA 12:30 PM SAFE HOUSE 2:45 PM TRANSPARENT LANDS 5:00 PM BINDUSAGAR 8:00 PM ELEPHANT MEMORY	SAMRAT AUDI 10:30 AM WONDROUS IS THE SILENCE OF MY MASTER 1:30 PM GIRL 4:30 PM HAIR, PAPER, WATER... 7:30 PM HAPPY BIRTHDAY	INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 3 10:30 AM THE VISUAL FEMINIST MANIFESTO 1:30 PM ISLE CHILD 4:30 PM THE MASTERMIND 7:30 PM SIRÂT
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 3 11:00 AM "MY DAD INVENTED THE VADAPAV" ASHOK VAIDYA AND SONS 12:00 AM BLACK RABBIT, WHITE RABBIT	MAQUINEZ PALACE AUDI 1 9:00 AM THE JANITOR 11:15 AM BALANCE 1:20 PM MANUSHYA 2:30 PM EK DOCTOR KI MAUT 5:15 PM AXIS OF LIFE 8:00 PM KU HANDZA	INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 1 10:00 AM K-POPER 1:00 PM SHAM 4:00 PM THE MYSTERIOUS GAZE OF THE FLAMINGO 7:00 PM LITTLE TROUBLE GIRLS	INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 4 10:45 AM IT'S A SAD AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD 1:45 PM AMRUM 4:45 PM FURY 7:45 PM IT WOULD BE NIGHT IN CARACAS
		INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 2 10:15 AM PIPLANTRI: A TALE OF ECO FEMINISM BATTLEFIELD	RAVINDRA BHAVAN MADGAON 4:00 PM VANYA MAGIC MOVIEZ PONDA 6:00 PM VANYA



Today's extraordinarily beautiful *The Peacock* cover is an eloquent testament to Shilpa Mayenkar Naik's profound artistic depth, with a host of her signature ants juxtaposed with delicate crochet needlework, which first came from Europe to Goa over 500 years ago. INTACH says "Goan crochet uses different techniques for different textiles. The motifs are often reminiscent of Goan life and culture, such as the commonly-used mandala design, valued for its symmetry, and used as a symbol in both Hinduism and Christianity."



PEACOCK PICKS

DREAMS (SEX LOVE)
9:00 AM
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1

MY FATHER'S SHADOW
11:30 AM
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1

THE PRESIDENT'S CAKE
4:15 PM
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1

SOUND OF FALLING
6:45 PM
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1

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Beverage Partner

Tea Partner

Airline Partner

Airport Partner

Screening Partner

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